

Pukshansky At The Celebration



This photograph was taken on May 9, 2005 in Saint Petersburg (May 9 is the Victory Day in Russia, a national holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of the World War II and also to honor the Soviets who died during the war.)

In the beginning of August I arrived in Leningrad. First of all I went to the military registration and enlistment office and said that I wanted to get demobilized. [Military registration and enlistment offices in the USSR and in Russia are special institutions that implement call-up plans.] And they answered 'Anyway this year it is late to enter a college, you'd better serve a year more.' In Leningrad there were many captured Germans who were reconstructing the city destroyed by them. My knowledge of German language was useful. I brought to rights documents of prisoners, drew up their private files. Authorities gave me a room near the city center. I got demobilized in summer of 1946 and entered the Shipbuilding College. [The Leningrad Shipbuilding College was found in 1902.]

I was taken in without entrance examinations, because I finished school having only excellent marks. At that time my school seemed to me a dream! Having finished the 2nd year, I went to work, because my stipend was not enough for living. I worked at a design office and it was not easy to combine it with my studies. During the war I forgot much I knew at school, and it was necessary to study hard. I was always hard pressed for money, sometimes it was necessary to unload cars at night to get some extra sum of money. Nevertheless I graduated from the College with distinction. Head of my design office wanted me to go on working at them. But during the procedure of mandatory job assignment there appeared Issanin (a member of the Russian Academy of Science), who invited young specialists to work at his design office on new topic: Creation of Undersea Fleet of the USSR. He wanted to give an employment only to excellent students and took me away from my former place of work. That was the way I got to the Central Design Office #16, where I worked about 40 years. It was the only place of my work; therefrom I retired on pension in 1989. My work was very interesting, I acquired good knowledge, was self-confident, and felt to be the right man in the right place.

I had to go on business trips very often. Sometimes I visited different factories, and sometimes it was necessary to dive testing our new submarines. You should know that during such tests a submarine has to dive at its depth-limit, which is twice more than by its usual depth. It was a serious test not only for the submarine, but also for investigators! My business trips were strictly confidential. Even my wife knew nothing about the time and place I left for. First-ever rocket launch from a submarine happened right before my eyes. It was on September 16, 1955. Here I have to say that during years of my work I never faced any manifestations of anti-Semitism. I received awards in peace time, too (I have 3 orders for my work).

Now I'll tell you about my wife. I married her in 1951 when I was a student of the 5th course. My wife's name was Sara Isayevna, her maiden name was Sheikhet. She was born in Leningrad in 1927. During the war she was evacuated and lived near Orenburg. She died in 2002, having not reached her 75th anniversary. In the year of our wedding Sara graduated from historical faculty of the Leningrad University. At that time it was extremely difficult for a Jew to be employed as a teacher of history, therefore she started working as a pioneer leader at school. Her salary was scanty, position of a pioneer leader did not require higher education, but many teachers (Jews) had to begin their pedagogical activity that way. Later she managed to find a place of a history teacher at school.

The only son of us Mikhail was born in Leningrad in 1952. He was a very good pupil (it is our family trait). I am very glad that I have managed to implant the love of chess to him. He has the ranks of Master of Sports and Honored Coach of Russia. Mikhail graduated from the Leningrad Polytechnic College and works as an engineer. He has got 2 children: Alexander (born in 1982) and Anna (born in 1990).